

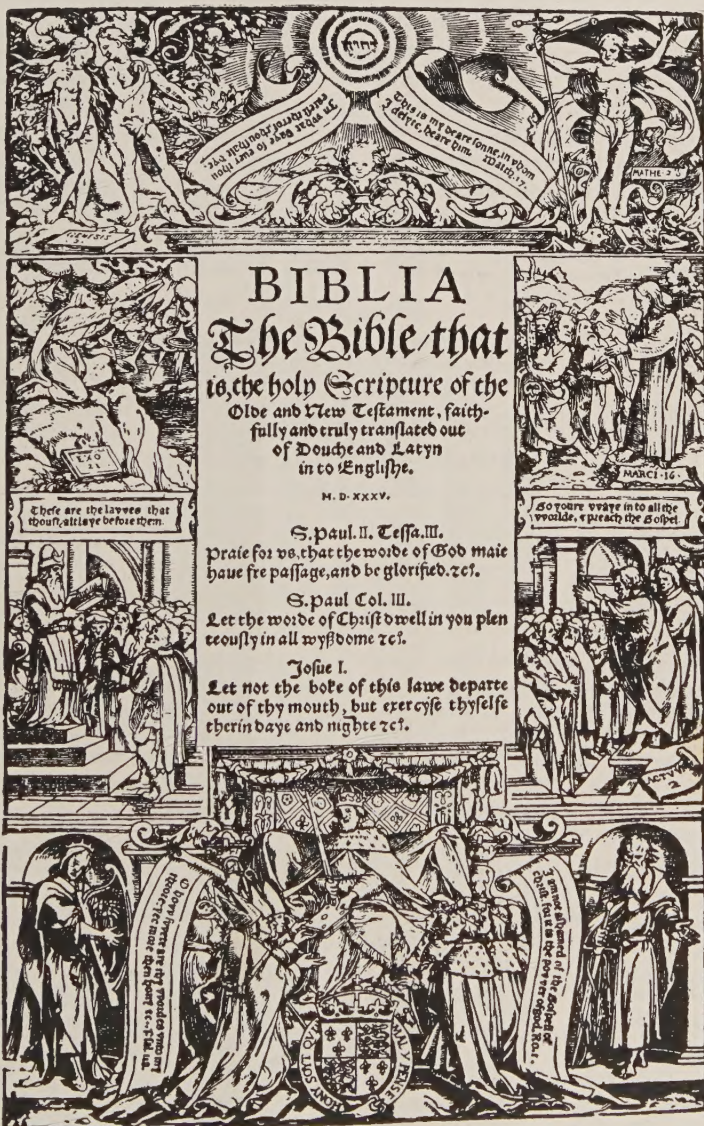
Bible Society Record

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One Dollar a Year

Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, Calif.



TITLE PAGE OF THE COVERDALE BIBLE

(See page 131)

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BIBLE SOCIETY RECORD

VOLUME 80

OCTOBER 1935

No. 8

Pages of Power

FOUR hundred years ago, for the first time, our Bible in English was put into print. Thus, in 1535, the "pages of power" wrought by the earnest English translator, Myles Coverdale, began to reach as never before the man on the street, in the field or in the shop with their story, their message, and their inspiration. What had been the possession of learned men became in a day the common property of the English-speaking people.

Today, we look back over four centuries in their history and find amazing evidence of the influence of the Bible in every aspect of their life and work. To meet their call for this book, more copies of it have been printed and distributed than of any book in any language.

Its poetry, essays, prayers, sermons, proverbs, parables, history, and its supreme biography of all time,—that of Jesus Christ,—directly and indirectly influence our daily lives. They contribute to our civilization, through the arts and sciences, in man's dealings with man, and in the direction of government, to such an extent that he who, perhaps, has never opened the covers of a Bible nevertheless reads its words and phrases in newspaper, magazine, and book.

In prose and in poetry, as well as in the common speech of everyday life, the Bible's contribution to us is surprising.

"The apple of his eye," "the salt of the earth," "the powers that be," "labor of love," "handwriting on the wall," "a mess of pottage," "the widow's mite," "we are the people," "the fat of the land," "the laborer is worthy of his hire," "whited sepulchres," "all things to all men,"—here are just a few of the hundreds of

Biblical expressions used on occasion by every one of us—and in each is a Biblical story that makes its quotation significant.

How many of us realize the Bible's influence upon the history of the American people?

To common reading of its "pages of power" in England may be traced the forces which resulted in the coming of the Pilgrims to these shores, contributed largely to the settlement of the Thirteen Colonies, and provided a common bond of understanding, that was to make possible a new nation.

When Connecticut was organized, its founders pledged themselves to "maintain the liberty and purity of the gospel"; and Roger Williams, under the same inspiration, sowed the seed of religious freedom in his government of Rhode Island.

From the Bible's inspiration have come many of the forces behind our social and economic progress. To the Golden Rule, the principle of brotherly love notably exemplified by William Penn and his Quaker settlers in Pennsylvania, and to the law of equality of men before God which was so revered by Abraham Lincoln, the American people owe a heavy debt. These

great teachings of the Bible have combined to bring about popular action to allay the sufferings of the unfortunate; to effect an end to slavery; to promote moderation and temperance in all things, and make for a social order where right living and right thinking are the rule.

The strength of a nation is the home life of its people. Almost without exception our greatest leaders have acknowledged the influence of a home devoted to the Bible and its teachings. In the train-

The gospel of S. Iohn.



The first Chapter.



In the begynnyng
was the woide, and
the woide was with
God, and God was
with woide. The same was
in the begynnyng with
God. All thinges we
re made by the same,
and without the same was made nothinge
that was made. In him was the life, and
the life was the light of men: and the light
shyneth in the darknesse, and the darknesse
comprehended it not.

Reproduction from the Society's copy of
the Coverdale Bible, printed in 1535

ing of the young there is for it no substitute.

What our civilization has gained from the printed Bible during four hundred years can be

multiplied by us many times over in the years ahead. All depends upon our faith in it and our devotion to its teachings!

Myles Coverdale

By Ezra Squier Tipple, D.D., L.H.D., President Emeritus, Drew University

THE English Bible has a distinction all its own. The familiar judgment of *Macaulay*—"The English Bible—a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power"—is so well known as almost to make necessary an apology for repeating it. Yet, as

this year brings the four hundredth anniversary of the first complete printed English Bible, it will help to remind us of our precious heritage, and the man whose name it bears—Myles Coverdale. And who was this Myles Coverdale?

It is probable that his surname was taken from the district where he was born, Coverdale, in what is called Richmondshire in the North Riding. The exact date of his birth is uncertain. It is now given as "about 1488," though it may have been somewhere near 1485. He died in 1568-69, having come to a goodly age, well beyond four score years, much admired, and followed by all the Puritans.

From his childhood he was a student, given to learning, eager, diligent, having a sturdy purpose and a tenacious memory. He studied philosophy and theology at Cambridge, and had an ever-growing circle of acquaintances, such as Sir Thomas More, Erasmus, and Thomas Cromwell, who was long his influential friend.

Some time after Coverdale entered the convent of Austin friars at Cambridge the famous Robert Barnes became its prior. When the latter was later arrested on a charge of heresy, Coverdale went with him to London to assist him in drawing up his defense. Later, leaving the convent, he assumed the habit of a secular priest and began at once to preach against confession and the veneration of images. The intimate facts concerning the life of Coverdale are rather obscure. An undated letter to Thomas Cromwell, prior at least to 1527, gives a hint of his religious inclinations and perhaps



DR. TIPPLE

of his activities. In this letter he writes that "I begyne to taste of Holy Schryptures." It is impossible to account for his movements between 1528 and 1535; but it is more than probable that most of the time was spent abroad. It has been asserted that, in 1529, he was at Hamburg, assisting Tyndale in his translation of the Pentateuch; but the evidence is doubtful.

He was writing, however, or translating in these silent years; for, in 1534, he brought out two books, both translations, "Ye Olde God and the Newe" and "Paraphrase Upon the Psalms." Beyond question he had begun the work of translating the Scriptures into English, which came to a glorious consummation in 1535 in the first printed English Bible.

In the history of the English Bible there are two outstanding names, William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale. While this article has to do primarily with the latter, the former has so large a place in the story of the English Bible that his name commands reverence, inasmuch as his was the first printed New Testament. Appearing in 1525, it was so eagerly sought after, that people went about saying that "the conscience of England has found a new King."

Coverdale, undoubtedly, owed much to Tyndale, building in large measure upon what had already been done by his predecessor. But he had genius and ability all his own. Nearly half a century ago, H. W. Hoare, an English writer, made this comparison between Coverdale and Tyndale: "If the latter be the Hercules among our Biblical laborers, the former is certainly the Orpheus. Diffident and retiring in disposition, of delicate susceptibility, literary dexterity and resource, with a wonderful ear for cadence and rhythm, it is to Coverdale we owe much of the beautiful music which seems to well up out of the perennial springs of our Authorized Version. 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me'; 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. Where can we find anything more perfect, un-

less it be in passages scattered up and down in our Prayer-book version of the Psalms, which is almost wholly, or in the Isaiah of our Bibles, which is very largely, from the hand of this beautiful translator? But, though contrasted with Tyndale in the main features of his character, he is also his indispensable literary complement, standing in relation to him as gentleness does to strength, pliability and grace to robustness and vigor, modesty to self-confidence."

To the study of the English Scriptures he gave practically his entire life. He wrote or translated numerous tracts and books, some twenty-six in all; but his chief distinction is

inal Hebrew and Greek texts. Coverdale was not without some knowledge of both these languages, but was much less well-equipped in this respect than Tyndale, as Coverdale modestly acknowledges. He knew German and Latin extremely well, and a little French. The five "interpreters," which he said that he used, are thought to have been the Vulgate, the Latin version of Pagninus, part of Luther's translation, the Zurich version, and Tyndale's Pentateuch and New Testament. His knowledge and ability seem to have been unquestioned. He was employed by Thomas Cromwell to assist in the Great Bible in 1539, which was ordered to be placed in all English churches. The text of this is largely that of the Bible of John Rogers, brought out in 1537 under the name of Thomas Matthew, of which the Old Testament from Ezra to Malachi and the Apocrypha were substantially Coverdale's own. The New Testament and the first part of the Old Testament were very closely Tyndale's.

In 1558, Coverdale may have had a share in the preparation of the Geneva version of the Scriptures, but the evidence is not conclusive. In the remainder of his life he was actively concerned in the wider circulation of the Bible.

Myles Coverdale was one of the leading figures during the progress of the reformed opinions in England and on the Continent. By his marriage which naturally was regarded as a protest against the doctrines of celibacy of the priesthood, he became identified completely with the reforming party. He was appointed bishop of Exeter in 1551, and the vigorous Protestantism of western England in the reign of Elizabeth was undoubtedly greatly aided by his powerful preaching and influence. On Mary's accession to the throne, 1553, he was deprived of his bishopric and ordered to London, but later permitted to leave for Denmark.

In 1554 he signed a remarkable confession of faith in conjunction with other Protestant bishops and martyrs imprisoned in London. Following the signature of the others, is annexed the following notable declaration:

To these things above said do I, Myles Coverdale, late bishop of Exeter, consent and agree with these, mine afflicted brethren, being prisoners. Mine own hand, M. C.

This man, modest, conscientious, laborious, a thoroughly honest and good man, who had a considerable share in the introduction of German spiritual culture to English readers in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, a consistently Protestant reformer, the church of the present day does well to honor both for the first Bible printed in English and for many of the most cherished phrasings of beautiful and tender passages of the Scriptures.



This picture of Coverdale is, apparently, the only one extant. Historical records portray him as good, gentle, modest, tactful, loyal, able, cultured, and brave

that the first complete Bible printed in English bears his name. It is this achievement which the present year commemorates. It may be, as is often said, that his translation as a work of scholarship does not rank with that of some other translators; but he accomplished what no other person prior to 1535 had done. He translated and published a Bible in the English language. The publisher and place of printing of the 1535 Bible have always been a mystery. These facts are not of primary importance. Coverdale was the inspiring genius of the enterprise. The place may have been Zurich, Frankford, Cologne, or Paris, what matters it? The work of translation was probably done at Antwerp, and the volume was probably printed on the press of Froschover in Zurich. In the version there is no definite mention of the origi-

Notes and Comments

APPROPRIATELY this number is largely devoted to articles connected with the Commemoration of Four Hundred Years of the Printed English Bible.

* * *

Sunday, October 6, to Bible Sunday, December 8, is the period during which this Commemoration is being emphasized and observed.

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THE importance of the Bible to English-speaking peoples is paralleled in the history of other nations and languages. Two articles in this issue are illustrations.

* * *

The letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem calls attention again to the fifteen hundredth anniversary of the Armenian Bible. It is a gracious message. Limits of space necessitate giving only its main paragraphs, but they tell a worthy story.

* * *

The story of the Malagasy Bible is only outlined. It, however, shows that the Bible exercises its marvelous influence in every century and clime. It has helped the Armenians for fifteen centuries; the English-speaking people from the time of Wycliff—six centuries; the tribes of Madagascar for a century; and still helps peoples and individuals brought into the light each year.

• •

THE Wuhan Chinese Bible Society, during recent months, as the summer before, promoted a Bible Sunday campaign among school stu-

dents and laymen in Wuhan cities. The provincial commissioners of education of Hupeh and Hunan, Mr. Cheng and Mr. Chu, the mayor of Hankow, Mr. Wu, and the principal of Central China University, Dr. Wei, have promised to give prizes to the students who take part in this campaign.

• •

THE Society's little leaflet "How to Use the Bible" has brought many grateful messages. A recent one from Kentucky says:

I have in my possession your small sheet "How to Use the Bible," which I use as a bookmark in my Bible. In the past few months I have brought it into service through my disturbance of mind. It has proven a most helpful balm to my heart and soul. As I go among my friends, they tell me of their troubles. I run along down this treasured little sheet until I find just what is needed.

• •

THE June issue of the New York Public Library bulletin had the strange story of a Bible on its shelves with the penciled legend:

U. S. Hornet foundered at
Sea in the Gale of Sept. 1829
And 199 Bibles like this went
down with her.

Simonds.
This the Only One Saved
Myself the only person.

The article contains a quotation from the thirteenth Annual Report of the American Bible Society, which records a grant of seventy Bibles designated for the U. S. Sloop Hornet made at the Annual Meeting on May 14, 1829, presided over by Colonel Richard Varick, the third President of the Society.

Nation-Wide Broadcast

Commemoration of Four Hundred Years of the Printed English Bible

Sunday, October 6

1:30 p. m. Eastern Time	12:30 p. m. Central Time
11:30 a. m. Mountain Time	10:30 a. m. Pacific Time

On the blue network of the National Broadcasting Company (WJZ and key stations)

From Pasadena: PROFESSOR ROBERT A. MILLIKAN
Speakers: From Chicago: MR. FRANK J. LOESCH
From Washington: THE HON. CORDELL HULL

The Secretary of State will present a message from the President of the United States.

Passages of Scripture will be read from New York from a copy of the first printed English Bible, and part of one of the great English oratorios will be sung.

The Bible and Modern Life

By Ivan Lee Holt, Ph.D., LL.D., Pastor, St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church, South, St. Louis

HOW many times in these distressing days can one open the Bible to read the admonition or the command of a contemporary! Perhaps the one who wrote the words lived 2,500 years ago; but he knew life so well that he speaks to men and women of all generations. The more we study the Bible, the more clearly we realize that it comes out of



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life's experiences. We have had the idea that God spoke its messages to men who had withdrawn, and who sat alone, to hear the divine voice. But we know now that the men who wrote the books of the Bible lived through trying situations, in which they had to have God's help; their words are the words of those who have suffered and struggled, the words of those who have sought and found God in their moments of temptation and defeat, as well as in their hours of triumph and victory. We do not minimize divine inspiration when we so clearly recognize human need and human aspiration.

The Hebrews who gave us the Old Testament lived in a continuous depression. Sometimes poverty and want were due to a devastating war; sometimes to a destructive famine; sometimes to a greedy king; but the people faced a depression in every generation. As we have sought a spiritual support for people in these days of distress, we may have come across the words of a psalmist who insists that his soul takes courage through the presence of One who can do more than the increase of corn and of new wine. The psalmist is saying that more is needed than the return of prosperity when people have lost their morale; the morale is restored when men see the face of God, and are sure that he is with them in their struggles.

We are concerned about the motive in our economic enterprises, and an adequate return to labor for its share in the production of wealth. We turn to read a parable of Jesus about the hiring of laborers. A man was seeking to gather his grapes, and he went in the early morning to the market place to hire men to work in his vineyard. He contracted with men to work for him and sent them into his vineyard. Later on, he returned to the market

place to hire more men. He came finally when the day was almost over, and asked men standing about, "Why are you not at work?" They answered, "We can find no jobs." Then he hired them, and, when the day was over, he paid these last as much as he paid those who had worked all day.

We have never understood such an economic system in America. We believe that every man should get what he earns,—every laboring man. Jesus seems to teach, in that parable, that every man should get what he needs. The last laborer to go to work had as large a family dependent on him as the first man who went to work, and was entitled to a comfortable standard of living. Those words "Unto this last" suggest an economic system which we are striving to work out in our new economic and social security legislation.

When the Jews came back from the Babylonian captivity, the leaders were concerned about the intermarriage with other peoples, and the consequent racial mixtures. Strict were the laws which forbade the marriage of Jews with those who were not Jews. Against the harshness and pride of such legislation some one wrote the lovely story of Ruth. It shows there was mixed blood in the veins of David, an ancestor whom they loved and respected. Was not Moabite blood in his veins? It is one of the ironies of history that the Jewish people in Germany are the victims of a similar racial pride. It must be granted, of course, that the situation in postexilic Palestine is not the same as that in modern Germany; but in Germany there is a harsh determination to preserve a pure Aryan strain. Jesus dealt with this problem when he talked with a woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, and when he made the Samaritan the good neighbor who did more for a man in need than even the religious leaders of the Jews.

Against that narrow nationalism which is the curse of our day, the Book of Jonah makes a vigorous protest. Jonah does not worship a God who cared for Assyrians. But God cares for the Assyrians; he is not the special and private Deity of the Palestinian Jews; he is the God of the world. A political leader of Japan has said that Japan does not want a world religion; Japan wants a Japanese religion. So it is with every land which thinks first and last of its own interests. Jesus set himself against the self-satisfaction and self-complacency of a Jewish nationalism in religion. That is surely one of the reasons for

his death. To those who looked forward to a Jewish heaven he said, "Many shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

We are concerned about a new strategy for Protestantism. We want to find a place for Christianity in our changed world. We pick up the Bible and read again the message of those who sought to make Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour of the Greco-Roman world. The letters of Paul are written to citizens of a larger world than Palestine. I like to think of the Gospel of St. John as a series of sermons in which a preacher is seeking to convince his hearers that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of men. He thinks of basic human needs—the need for bread and water and light and life. Jesus is Saviour because he is the satisfaction of human needs. He is the Water of Life, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Eternal Life. Whatever man has to have, that Jesus is.

Men today are in need. Were we as able interpreters of Jesus as was the preacher John of Ephesus, we could convince men that he can meet every individual's need. A Bible that comes out of life's needs can reach life's needs; life thus ministers to life.

We are today so often aware of the fact that we have outgrown our beliefs and ideas. We are like the captive Jew in Babylon who felt that he could not sing the Lord's song in Babylon. Babylon was the prosperous capital of a great empire. The Lord's song was sung in a much smaller Jerusalem, in a city whose temple was in ruins. Common sense seemed to convince the Jew that he ought to worship gods who protected their temples and city. Why not worship the gods of Babylon? Fosdick reminds us that this Jew came into contact with life and decided he could not sing any other song than the Lord's song. He found that grief and love and sin were the same in Babylon as in Jerusalem. It was life in its deepest needs that made him seek deepest satisfaction. We are in a much larger world than our fathers knew, but the message that met their needs meets our needs as well. The problem that the Jew faced in Babylon is exactly the same problem we moderns face in our enlarged world. The message of the Bible is God's word to us in our lives. It is modern and contemporary. It is as much at home in modern New York and London as in old Jerusalem. The life of any book is directly proportioned to its understanding and meeting of human needs. Some books last a few months; others last a few years; the Bible has lasted for centuries. A new translation of the Bible may be made when men feel

that the English of the seventeenth century is not the spoken English of today. But, in the last analysis, the Bible can be made modern, because it is modern. You cannot take another book and make it modern by modernizing the language. It must speak to the mind and soul of today.

In this message I have not taken the Bible and made it fit contemporary situations. I have considered the main problems of individual, social, national, and international life, and have simply indicated what the Bible says to those who face these problems.

There are earnest students who search Old Testament prophecies for references to contemporary happenings; or who go through the Book of Revelation for the foretelling of an Italian-Abyssinian struggle. It is possible in all such study to arrive at some fantastic conclusions, and to read into the Bible what one wants to put there. I am not interested in that kind of Biblical contemporaneity. What I want to urge is, that we go to the Bible with the problems and difficulties of our modern life. Any man who takes the problems of yesterday morning, and the difficulties of this afternoon, will find the Bible more than his mother's book. It will be his guide for the solution of tomorrow's problem and the world's help for next week's difficulties. It lives because it comes from life and is ever creating richer life.

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By Sailboat, Canoe, and Truck

By Mr. John Ritchie, Secretary, Upper Andes Agency

COLPORTEUR BALLADARES has been at work in central and northern Ecuador. Along the northern coast he found open doors and good sales. He traveled from Esmeraldas to Limones on a sailing boat on which the bishop of Portoviejo was also a passenger. He spoke with his fellow passengers and offered his books. On arrival the bishop issued a warning to the people not to buy. But the sales were very good, and the people listened attentively to his message. Thence he traveled four hours by canoe to Borbón, and in this remote place, where he found much hostility to religion, he had excellent sales. From Borbón he traveled on by truck to Pedro Carbo, where the inhabitants are very religious. Here also his sales of Bibles, Testaments, and Gospels were very good.

When offering his books in a shop in Guano, those present mocked him and urged him to join them in drinking. Quietly and earnestly he spoke of righteousness and of coming judgment, and then sold quite a number of Bibles and Testaments.

"Life Is Different Now"

By the Rev. D. H. Stanton, D.D., Secretary, Atlanta Division,
William Ingraham Haven Memorial Agency among the Colored People

ENCOURAGING stories come from the field of how appreciative many are of having even portions given to them. One of the voluntary workers writes: "I was stopped on the streets the other day by a stranger, who was all smiles and who, as he reached for my hand, said, 'I can never forget you; you have meant so much to me.' Before I had time to answer him, he reached into his pocket and took out a badly worn copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and added: 'Do you remember this? Well, you gave it to me when I was confined to the hospital, and life is different now.' Without waiting for a word, he bade me a smiling good-by, and moved happily onward; but the words 'life is different now' remained."

Another worker—one of our regular correspondents—writes: "I met a young man on the train today, who seemed anxious to serve me in many ways again and again as we rode together. Being pleased with his courtesies and the familiar way he pronounced my name, I asked him to tell me just where he learned it. He quickly replied, taking one of our five-cent Testaments from his pocket, 'The day you gave me this book and placed your name there' (turning to the cover page), 'you asked me to read it each day. I have done it, and everything has been better for me.'"

There are tens of thousands of lives here that would be different if only touched by the message and power of the Bible.

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From the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

To the Managers of the American Bible Society

DEAR SIRS: In view of the fact that, next to the Armenian nation, the idea of the celebration of the fifteenth centenary of the translation of the Bible into Armenian would be of particular interest to the American Bible Society, we were about to inform you of the special decretal of His Holiness Khoren I, the Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians, concerning it, when we learned that your Society had held a commemorative gathering* in the Synod Hall of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Allow us to present the warm gratitude of the Armenian nation and of the hierarchy of the Armenian Church for the kind interest thereby exhibited so spontaneously.

In accordance with a special decree sent to us by His Holiness the Supreme Catholicos, we have nominated here in Jerusalem a central committee to celebrate the centenary with the solemnity due to its high significance. We have said that it is our special desire that those meetings may be held specially on the nearest Sundays to March 2, July 18, and October 26, the days on which the Armenian Church commemorates the blessed translators of the Holy Bible.

The translation of the book containing the Word of God into Armenian, or, in other words, God's speaking to the Armenians in Armenian, is an epoch-making event in the his-

tory of the Armenians. The apostolic evangelization of Armenia which was carried out in the first century, and the organization of the national church which was accomplished by St. Gregory the Illuminator in the beginning of the fourth century, when the religion of the gospel became also the state religion, would have lost a great deal of its value or would have been incomplete without the translation of the Bible into Armenian.

The Armenian Bible, which was the chief incentive in the invention of the Armenian alphabet, became also the great cornerstone of the Armenian literature which was entirely planned, shaped and developed under its influence and in its spirit. It is for that reason that the religious and national feelings of the Armenians were amalgamated to such an extent, that it is difficult to think of the national life among the Armenians without the Christian life. That it was the Bible and the Armenian Church together which, in the first half of the fifth century, regenerated and reformed the Armenian nation, has been a common and well-established conviction from early times among us.

This faith and spirit had from the first dominated the minds of St. Sahak and St. Mesrob who conceived the idea of the Armenization of the Bible. They were both absorbed with the thought that that was the only means by which the moral integrity and character of a nation, endangered in its political life, could be pro-

* December 9, 1934. See January 1935 BIBLE SOCIETY RECORD.

tected. Nor were they disappointed. In the most critical periods of her history, the nation has always found in the Bible, more than anywhere else, that power which was needed to impart her strength and courage. The Bible was thus not only the most precious treasure of the church, but also of the family. During the deportations in the Great War it was wonderful to see men and women, who had to leave everything behind, that could not part with their Bibles, which they carried with them in all their sorrowful journeyings, that they might pray and worship with the Holy Scriptures as a sanctuary of their religion.

The Bible is the fountainhead of our spirituality and character. It is difficult to find a conscientious Armenian who does not believe this. We are confident that, during the present

dark and unfortunate days of Armenian life, it will shine forth once more as that divine light which alone can clear and unmistakably show the path of her destiny.

We cannot close our letter without expressing our warm gratitude for the great service which your Society has rendered to our people by giving them Bibles in classical and modern Armenian, which served most magnificently in spreading and deepening the Word of God in the present generation of our people. We send our fatherly greetings to you and all the members of your Society, asking the blessing and protection of the Almighty Father on one and all.

With brotherly love in Christ,
ARCHBISHOP THORKOM KOUCHAKIAN,
Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem.

English Prose Writers and the English Bible

By Frank Allen Patterson, Ph.D., Professor of English, Columbia University



PROF. PATTERSON

THE English Bible has constantly exerted a great influence upon English prose writers. Though this fact is generally accepted by critics of English literature, it is fitting upon the four hundredth anniversary of the printing of the first complete English Bible to examine again the debt which the prose writers owe to it.

For, curiously enough, even those who are indifferent to it are unable to use the vehicle of the language in which it was printed, or address a society built upon the foundation of its ideals, without being dependent upon its manner and substance.

For the present purpose it will be sufficient to consider this dependence in three of its manifestations. The Bible permeates our literature in a structural way by its vocabulary and style; in a literary way, by its suggestion of themes, allusions, and quotations; and in a fundamental way, by its relation to the conduct and ideals of the people.

Perhaps its most inescapable influence is that of vocabulary and style. The Bible was in process of translation into English in the sixteenth century, when the language was simple and vigorous. The makers of the Authorized Version of 1611 used the best of these earlier

translations, including that of 1535, employing almost entirely native English words. Moreover, they combined these words into idioms and expressions in a manner to produce a style direct and clear, yet rhythmic and dignified. All succeeding versions, while gaining greater accuracy, have kept these original fine qualities.

As the English language took on its permanent form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Bible was a household book, and helped establish the vigorous character of the workaday speech. Although the translators had labored chiefly to make the Bible intelligible to the ordinary folk, they accomplished vastly more; for they produced not only a popular version, but at the same time a textbook of lucid, beautiful diction, which has always been the touchstone of English style. Consequently, all English writers use the vocabulary of the Bible whether or not they accept its deeper values. Gibbon, indifferent to the religion of the Bible, unconsciously derived the rhythmic flow of his sentences from that source, as surely did Bunyan, for whom the Bible was a primer of English as well as a torch of salvation. Call the long roll of English prose writers, and all must answer to the same source for much that is best in their language and style.

When Francis Bacon turned from producing Latin treatises to writing English essays, he struck at once into the short, crisp, coherent sentences of Bible language, though ornamenting them according to his own ingenuity. Milton, while using classical words and rolling sen-

tences suited to his lofty themes in both poetry and prose, kept the Scriptural rhythm, and, under deep personal feeling in the sonnet on his blindness, fell back upon the simplicity of the Bible. Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Isaac Walton, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Defoe, Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot, Ruskin, Arnold, Meredith, Hardy, Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, and others of the long line employed this vocabulary and style, each with variations within the frame of his own genius.

Let a few of them witness for themselves their indebtedness to the Bible. Milton gave to the Psalms and the Prophets preeminence over all literature. Coleridge said "a study of the Bible will keep any man from being vulgar in style." Ruskin, in "Praeterita," wrote that his taste was due to learning by heart certain chapters. Macaulay pronounced it a book which shows the whole extent of the beauty and power of the language. Swift called its translators masters of style. Landor affirmed that it reveals more genius and taste than any volume in existence.

Many found themes and subject-matter in the Bible. Although the work of the poets lies outside the province of this brief article, it is worth while to recall that Milton's three chief poems dealt with Paradise, lost and regained, and with Samson, blind and enslaved. In his prose, whether Latin, as in the "Christian Doctrine," or English, as in the divorce tracts and "the Tenure of Kings," he relied upon the Bible for authority as absolutely as lawyers depend upon Blackstone. "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding" were based upon the plan of salvation as Bunyan interpreted it from his study of the New Testament. Jeremy Taylor in "Holy Living" and "Holy Dying," Sir Thomas Browne in "Religio Medici," Dryden in "The Hind and the Panther," Dickens in his *Story of the Bible*, J. Middleton Murry in "God,"—all used Bible material or parallels, as did Dryden in his "Absalom and Achitophel." Even Isaac Newton wrote discussions of Scripture.

Moreover, these writers employed Bible allusions and quotations to gain dignity and authority. Only a few of the vast range of examples can be given. Shakespeare is considered to be but vaguely interested in the Bible. A recent book by Richmond Noble, however, reveals him frequently and studiously alluding to the Bible, especially in "The Merchant of Venice," to intensify emotional effects. Lamb often quoted Scripture, such as, "He is the true taxer that calleth all the world up to be taxed." De Quincy compared Joan of Arc to David.

Eliot and Hardy used many Bible allusions.

But, in addition to its stylistic and literary ascendancy, the Bible exerts an influence much more significant. This fundamental influence results from the inevitable interrelation of literature and life. Literature is not merely writing, but a reflection of the thought and customs of its time. In a sense, it is all history, often conveying information which historical treatises are unable to give. A story laid in a remote time or place emphasizes this fact. Scott's "Talisman" makes us appreciate the times and conditions of the Crusades and the temper and force of Mohammedanism. Melville's "Typee" is a revelation of pagan customs on the isle of Bali. In the same way, literature depicting English life through the centuries reflects the religion of each period and the changing attitude toward the Bible, whose influence, though constant, has had varying effects.

The English Bible, put into the hands of the people, led in the sixteenth century to the Puritan revolution, which is responsible for much that is best in English as well as American life. The prose of that century and the next is tinged with deep religious emotion, and often with terror, because of the strife in church and state brought about by the stress upon sin and hell on the one hand, and salvation and heaven on the other. Burton, Hooker, Milton, and Bunyan, all show this deep feeling.

As a reaction, in the eighteenth century Englishmen feared religious enthusiasm and sought rather to set up common-sense ideals of conduct. Butler attacked the Puritan interpretation of the Bible as sanctimonious and intolerant. Swift, Addison, and Steele endeavored to better society in a practical rather than a religious way. Addison urged Sabbath observance, not as a Puritan necessity for salvation, but as a means to right thoughts and decent manners. Johnson, in all he wrote, aimed to promote a reasonable piety. He used the Bible for this end. Gibbon so reacted against religious excess as to give a cold, critical discussion of early Christianity in his famous history. Defoe made all his wicked characters repent. Even "Robinson Crusoe" is full of moral reflections.

As the nineteenth century advanced, the rapid development of machinery and commerce brought about an absorption in material things for some and unemployment for others. People became materialistic and superficial. Nearly every writer of this period raised his voice in protest and warning, or strove to promote social justice. Carlyle, like a Hebrew prophet, cried out against worshipping the steam engine while forgetting the God of the Bible. Ruskin

preached the same doctrine and spent time and money to help the oppressed. Arnold, breaking with dogma, still admired the Bible and pleaded for a more liberal attitude toward it.

Novelists were likewise preachers. Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen presented life as they saw it; self-centered and concerned with social duties rather than with human needs. Dickens attacked definite social evils. Thackeray displayed the sorrows resulting from sin, weakness, and stupidity. George Eliot, while professedly an agnostic, animated her noblest characters with Christian faith. Meredith showed up evildoers as ridiculous.

The nineteenth century has now blended with

the twentieth. The peoples of the earth are struggling with the hideous aftermath of a world war and with unemployment. Two great governments have rejected the Bible. But, in the English-speaking countries, the sacred book is still shaping both civilization and literature. If history repeats itself, the ideals of the Bible will prevail; for, as Drinkwater says, "The surface of our common culture is littered with transient enthusiasms, vulgar emotions and moral wreckage, but below strong currents move steadily; and, in a large measure, these currents flow from the Bible, which now for four centuries has been the ultimate source of the Anglo-Saxon culture."

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The Epic Story of the Malagasy Bible

By Lewis Birge Chamberlain

"It is reported from Tananarive, Madagascar, that the centenary of the first translation of the complete Bible into Malagasy was celebrated with great fervor by the 3,300 Protestant churches in the island. The Malagasies are studious readers of the Bible. Of all books the Bible has the largest sale among the native population."—*Courrier des Etats-Unis*, September 14, 1935.

BACK of this brief dispatch from the Associated Press lies a marvelous story of persecution, terror, martyrdom, and triumph, worthy of periodic mention.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, a treaty by Great Britain for the suppression of the slave trade, with Radama I, a progressive ruler of the Malagasies, opened the doors for the first missionaries in Madagascar. Radama was one of the most enlightened reformers ever on a throne, and not only the slave trade, but infanticide, sorcery, and superstition were largely abolished, the language reduced to writing, and schools and Christian missions aided.

Through the British and Foreign Bible Society portions of the Scripture soon began to be published, and in 1835 the complete Bible in Malagasy became available. In the meantime, Radama had died and been succeeded by his chief wife, who was a reactionary, attached to idolatry and sorcery and superstition. She obstructed and overturned the advances in education and religious life. The climax came soon after the issuing of the Bible, by an edict proscribing Christianity. Public worship was prohibited; all Scriptures, hymn books, and other religious literature were corralled by the government; death, or confiscation and slavery were prescribed for any possessing or using the

Scriptures, worshipping God, or consorting with Christians.

At this time there were only some hundreds of openly avowed Christians. But the staunchness of these few was great. The persecution became terrible. The fuller story is one of torture and martyrdom; of almost incredible cruelty on the one part, and like courage on the other. The persecution continued for twenty-five years. It is reckoned that many thousands were subjected to torture and death during this quarter century. Despite this, the number of Christians kept increasing.

At the death of this reactionary queen, Ránaváloná, in 1861, a respite came. Her successor was favorable to Christians. Then developed an astounding fact.

There were ten thousand Christians at the end of this quarter century of persecution, over against the one thousand at its beginning. And this notwithstanding the torture and death of many thousands of Christians in the interim.

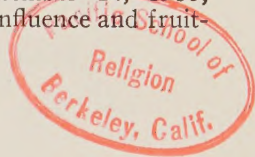
The single factor used by the Spirit of God to accomplish this result was the Scriptures. William Canton, in his History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, says: "For a quarter of a century the Malagasies had no spiritual teacher but the Scriptures; no friend or counselor but the Scriptures; no light in darkness, no strength in weakness, no consolation in trouble, no hope in death but the Scriptures. They were read in secret, buried in the earth for safety, treasured more jealously than gold. As the sacred volumes grew scarce, passages were circulated in writing, and prized as precious seed for the sowing of new harvests. But in

all the years of their need the Word of God never failed."

This is the first chapter of the story back of the Associated Press dispatch. Other chapters followed. In 1861, Radama II became king and was at first favorable to the Christians, but changed in his short reign of two years. He was succeeded by his wife who, while not a professed Christian, was favorable to Christians during her brief reign of five years. She was succeeded by her cousin, Ránavalona II, who also was not a Christian. But, finding a neglected Bible in the palace, she read it and "her mind was changed." She became a de-

vout Christian, and idolatry was banished. A palace church was built, the Bible was given a place of honor, and there were many striking incidents among the people. In 1870 there were 21,000 communicants, 232,000 attendants at church services, and over 2,000 native pastors and evangelists, with many schools and scholars and Bible Classes. Sad days came to the queen and her people when the French began to assume control of Madagascar, and the path of Protestantism has not been smooth.

But the dispatch of September 14, 1935, speaks for the unquenchable influence and fruitfulness of the Bible.



Gospels at a Hindu Festival

By D. A. Clarence, Evangelist, Arcot Mission, India

The Society makes annual donations to the Arcot Mission of the Reformed Church in America, to assist it in distributing Scriptures.

THOUSANDS of people, literate and illiterate, flock together at Mallianoor every year to celebrate the great festival of the goddess Poongavanam. The village of Mallianoor is in the South Arcot District of the Madras Presidency, twenty miles from Arni and six miles from Gnanodiam—two mission stations of the American Arcot Mission. The place is not very important, except for this festival in honor of the goddess who is supposed to be the head of all devils. Once a year, demon-possessed folk, mostly young women, come to the festival. No sooner do they arrive, than they begin to dance as though they were out of their minds. They dance, jump, scream, and run in fearful fashion, eat the ashes of burnt corpses, and some hang the entrails of animals about their necks. Worshipers of evil spirits come by thousands to this festival. It is the function of Poongavanam, the head of the devils, to drive out the lesser spirits.

The origin of this festival seems to be hid in obscurity. Tradition has it, that a certain man was carrying a bag of grain to his village when, on the way, a woman met him and asked for alms. The man opened his sack and gave her a handful of grain and went his way. When, on reaching home, he opened his sack, he found, to his surprise, that his bag was filled with pearls and other precious stones. He was then convinced that he had given his alms to a goddess. While in search of her, he found her at Mallianoor, and built a temple in her honor.

To this festival in March of this year came six missionaries and some of us evangelists and teachers, to share with the deluded people our experience in Christ, and to sell Scripture por-

tions and distribute tracts. The chairman of our evangelistic work, Dr. C. R. Wierenga, had brought a large supply. We stood in different centers and, according to his directions, told different gospel stories especially suitable and apt to the situation. As soon as the story was told, he spoke to the people about the little books he held in his hands which contained such truths and other good news. Again and again our stock in hand was sold out, and a new supply was fetched from the car. We even entered into the temple itself with our message of salvation and the written Word of God. Within two hours our whole supply of Gospel portions was entirely exhausted.

THE BIBLE IN OUR DAY

A Symposium

Seven vivid, helpful addresses to ministers on using and preaching the Bible, by

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH
JAMES I. VANCE
CHARLES E. JEFFERSON
ALBERT W. BEAVEN
W. RUSSELL BOWIE
ABDEL ROSS WENTZ
CHARLES F. WISHART

Issued originally for successive Bible Sundays.

Available in book form (Oxford University Press) about October 15. Post-paid for \$1.00 from the American Bible Society, Bible House, New York, N. Y.

THE Secretary of one of the Divisions of the Agency among the Colored People tells of a preacher who wanted some Bibles for converts in a meeting he was conducting, and who had been one of the worst men in the country before he was himself converted, having thirty-

two bullet holes in his body that officers of the law and others had shot into him while he was living a life of crime. He believes fully in the power of the Holy Scriptures, and was giving every convert in his meeting a Bible or Testament to read.

BIBLE SOCIETY RECORD

EDITORS *The Secretaries*

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 1935

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

INSTITUTED 1816

Bible House, Astor Place, New York

THE American Bible Society was instituted in 1816 with the sole object of encouraging wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment.

Its program is world-wide and includes the *translation* of the Scriptures into the languages and common dialects of the people; the *publication* of the Scriptures in styles suitable and convenient, and at the lowest possible cost; the *distribution* of the Scriptures throughout the world at cost or free, as a missionary program.

Membership in the Society consists of four classes, each with its special privileges:

1. Annual Members are constituted by an annual subscription of \$5.00.
2. Life Members are constituted by a subscription of \$50.00 at one time.
3. Life Directors are constituted by a subscription of \$150.00 in one or two payments.
4. Memorial Members are constituted by a contribution of \$100.00. The contributor names the one in whose memory the Membership is created. The Bible is distributed through the years in memory of such a person.

Handsome engraved certificates are presented to Life Directors and Life Members.

Full information about the privileges of Membership will be sent on application.

The Society is supported by the gifts of its members and friends and by the contributions of Christian churches with which the Society has official and semiofficial relations.

AUGUST MEETING OF THE BOARD

THE fourth stated meeting of the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society in its one hundred and twentieth year was held at the Bible House at 3:30 p. m., on Thursday, August 1, 1935. President John T. Manson was in the chair.

Devotional exercises were conducted by Mr. John Binns.

The minutes of the third stated meeting were presented and were approved.

The minutes of standing committees were approved, and recommendations adopted.

An agreement with the British and Foreign Bible Society concerning the administration of the work of the two societies in Chile and Uruguay was approved, providing for the administration of the work in Chile by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and that in Uruguay by the American Bible Society, both Societies financing the work in each country and receiving proportionate credit for results.

The bequest of \$2,500 from Mrs. Helen B. Montgomery was set aside as a trust fund to be known as the Helen Barrett Montgomery Trust, in memory of Mrs. Montgomery's interest in the work of the Society and excellent translation of the New Testament from the original Greek into English.

A further grant of 10,000 New Testaments was authorized for distribution in the C.C.C. camps, making the total now 105,000 so far provided by the Society for this purpose.

The Treasurer reported the following consignments to the Society's Foreign Agencies during the month of June: Brazil, 3,499 volumes, valued at \$3,094.61; Caribbean, 34 volumes, valued at \$48.94; La Plata, 286 volumes, valued at \$342.16; Levant, 5 volumes, valued at 69 cents; Philippines, 155 volumes, valued at \$55.40; Upper Andes, 32,000 volumes, valued at \$728.38; West Indies, 315 volumes, valued at \$288.22; total volumes, 36,294; total value, \$4,558.40.

The issues from the Bible House during the month of June were 208,809 volumes.

The meeting was adjourned.

HOW TO SEND MONEY BY MAIL

Your money may be lost if you enclose in an ordinary letter silver coin, bills or postage stamps.

THE SAFE WAY IS ONE OF THESE FOUR:

1. Register the letter in which you send bills or postage stamps. Any postmaster will register a letter for fifteen cents.
2. Send the money by Bank check or draft.
3. Send it by an Express Company's money order.
4. Send it by a Post-office money order.

Whichever way is chosen, address the letter and make the check, draft, or order, payable to Gilbert Darlington, Treasurer, Bible House, Astor Place, New York.

New and Timely

THE National Commemoration Committee of the Four Hundred Years of the Printed English Bible has rendered especial service by sponsoring the timely and valuable literature recorded below. The list is worthy of wide publicity. The literature can be obtained through the offices of the Society. Orders must be accompanied by remittances.

Pamphlets for Speakers and Writers

- No. 1. *A Ready Reference History of the English Bible.* Including chronological chart and bibliography. 28 pages. 15 cents a copy.
 - No. 2. *The Influence of the English Bible on the English Language and on English and American Literature.* A rapid survey citing 91 authors. 24 pages. 15 cents a copy.
 - No. 3. *The English Bible and the Life and Ideals of the English-speaking Peoples.* Material on the Bible and Civil Life, the Bible and Social Reform, the Bible in Education, the Bible in the Home. 24 pages. 15 cents a copy.
 - No. 4. *The English Bible and British and American Art.* A brief introduction and a listing of painting and sculpture by 228 artists with biographical notes. 28 pages. 15 cents a copy.
 - No. 5. *What the Bible Can Do for Us Today.* A symposium of speech-points by fourteen leading speakers and writers. 16 pages. 10 cents a copy.
- Combination Offer:* The complete set of Nos. 1-5, 50 cents a set.

Leaflets for Widespread Distribution

These are written, not for Bible-lovers chiefly, but to reach if possible the indifferent and the untouched. For use in community canvasses, for enclosure in letters, for distribution in pastoral calling, Bible Class visitation, etc.

- No. 6. *Out of Pages of Power.* 6 pages. Why we commemorate 400 years of the printed English Bible. 500 for \$1.00. Smaller or larger quantities at the same rate.
- No. 7. *Worthwhile Ways of Reading the Bible.* 6 pages. 500 for \$1.00. Smaller or larger quantities at the same rate.

Other Material

- No. 8. *Pageant-Drama.* "The Power of the Word" containing "In Living Characters," a pageant, and "Fine Gold," a playlet. By Dr. Elliott Field. For churches and schools. 10 cents a copy; 6 copies for 50 cents.
- No. 9. *The Promotion of the Use of the Bible in the Parish.* Suggestions gathered from many sources. One copy free on request.
- No. 10. *Commemoration Suggestions for Church Schools and Young People's Societies.* Prepared by the staff of the International Council of Religious Education. For passing to Sunday-school and Young People's officers. 6 copies free on request.
- No. 11. *The History of the English Bible in Facsimile Pages.* High-grade facsimile, exact size of originals, mounted in folders with historical descriptions. \$2.00 a set, one set only to a purchaser.

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Our Cover Picture

THE general title of the Coverdale Bible was printed from four woodcuts: two across the top and bottom, and one on each side. The center top of the first block contains the sacred name in Hebrew; in the left corner a picture of the Fall, "Genesis 2," and the words in the scroll, "In what daye so ever thou eatest thereof, thou shalt dye." The right corner has the risen Christ, "Mathe. 28," with the words in the scroll, "This is my deare sonne, in whom I delyte, heare him." The left center block has Moses on the Mount at the top, receiving the Tables of the Law, "Exo. 21," and the words "These are the lawes, that thou shalt laye before them." The lower half represents the reading of the law "3 Esdre. 9." The right center block, at the top, pictures

our Lord giving his last charge to the disciples, "Marci. 16," with the words "Go youre waye in to all the worlde, & preach the Gospel." Below is St. Peter preaching, "Actum 2." The bottom block has, in the center, Henry VIII on his throne, above the royal arms; holding in his right hand a sword and with his left presenting the Bible to a group of prelates kneeling at his right; a group of nobles kneeling on the left. In the left corner is David with his harp and the words in the scroll "O how sweete are thy wordes unto my throte: yee more then honey etc., Psal. 118." In the right corner St. Paul holds a sword, the scroll carrying the words "I am not ashamed of the Gospell of Christ, for it is the power of god."

The original is 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

"It Grieved Me—

That other nations should be more plenteously provided for with the Scripture in their mother tongue than we." So wrote the translator, Myles Coverdale, to "the Christian Reader" in the first printed English Bible.

We have a different cause for grief—we who have been blessed by the labors of Myles Coverdale in our literature, our art, our education—yea, in our own souls. It is our concern that there yet remain nations not plenteously provided with the Scriptures, and that there are among us tens of hundreds of thousands who do not know and love this Bible.

"In gratitude for four centuries of the English Bible," one person has sent from far-away Hawaii a gift of \$500. Dear Christian reader, in gratitude for God's gift to you, will you not among your friends and in your own town bring the Bible to those who need it, and help by your gifts to carry it also to the nations?

Said Myles Coverdale in the very next sentence—"therefore, when I was instantly required, though I could not do so well as I would, I thought it yet my duty to do my best, and that with a good will."

And he did.

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